



Protocol for Use of Comfort Dogs at a Crisis Location

Requesting the LCC K9 Comfort Dogs:

Generally, the district point person will initiate the request for one or more dogs. If the Regional Crisis Team (RCT) is activated, the team leader will make the request.

Types of Crises:

LCC K9 comfort dogs are highly trained and are prepared to respond to a variety of crisis situations, including but limited to disasters and deaths of students or staff. Generally, the LCC K9 comfort dogs can be helpful after any crisis that has a significant emotional impact on students and staff.

Needs:

When a comfort dog is deployed to your school, it is ideal that they have a large open room with carpeting or another soft floor surface. Students and staff can gather around the dog and sit on the floor. Having carpeting, pillows, or mats for affected individuals will contribute to a comfortable and supportive climate. The dogs may also be used outside of the comfort room. For example, comfort dogs sometimes greet students at the bus. *The dogs will also need to take periodic bio breaks. A relief area for the comfort dogs is essential.*

Length of Stay:

The depth of the crisis will determine the length of the stay. Generally, the comfort dog will stay for one or two days. However, the K9s are sometimes available for longer stays if warranted or requested.

Role of K9 and the Handler:

While the handler may have extensive crisis experience, their role is to “show up and shut up.” The handler will generally stay silent when the K9 is in service. The handler will place the K9 in a “down/stay” and allow people to interact with the comfort dog. The K9’s role is to be a presence of comfort and compassion for those affected.

Role of Helping Professionals:

Helping professionals should be present in the room when affected individuals are interacting with the K9. School helpers may sit and observe, or they may wish to facilitate conversations around the comfort dogs. School helpers should always supervised affected individuals when they are visiting with the K9.

Student Access:

While each situation is different, students and others affected are typically allowed free access to the K9. However, the dog handler may need to limit the number of people around the comfort dog so the K9 does not become overwhelmed.

Fees:

Got Comfort? is a not-for-profit organization and provides the comfort dogs at no cost to schools. Donations are appreciated, but are not required.

Concerns and Considerations:

Empty Chair Moments- If a student has died, it is sometimes helpful to have the comfort dog join the school helpers when addressing the “empty chair.” LCC K9 comfort dogs can be helpful in these situations.

Other Service Dogs- LCC K9 comfort dogs are highly trained, certified, and insured. All handlers are also highly trained and have completed criminal background checks. This may not be the case with other organizations who provide this service.

Allergies- LCC K9 comfort dogs are not allergy free. Students with allergies to dog hair are usually aware and will voluntarily avoid the dogs.

Club Comfort- Some communities in our area have established a club that meets regularly to collaborate with the comfort dogs and perform good deeds for affected individuals. Individuals interested in establishing Club Comfort in their communities should contact:

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This document was developed on 12-1-15 by Jen Marr, Lynn Allen, Mike Sellet, and Gabriel Lomas